

### *Status of the Claims*

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

1. (currently amended)      An injection molding apparatus, comprising:
  - a manifold having a manifold channel for receiving a melt stream of moldable material under pressure;
  - a mold plate adjacent said manifold, said mold plate having a an opening, a mold gate, and a mold cavity;
  - a nozzle being received in said opening in said mold plate, said nozzle having a nozzle channel in fluid communication with said manifold channel;
  - a nozzle tip received in a downstream end of said nozzle and having a melt channel in fluid communication with said nozzle channel and a valve pin guiding portion provided at a downstream end of said nozzle ~~through which said valve pin is aligned with said mold gate~~, wherein a gap is present between said nozzle tip and said nozzle and wherein said nozzle tip is at least partially slidable within said nozzle channel; and
  - a valve pin movable through said manifold channel, said nozzle channel and said melt channel to selectively open said mold gate, wherein said valve pin is aligned with said mold gate through the valve pin guiding portion.

2. (original)      An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said nozzle tip is flexible and bends laterally to align said melt channel with said mold gate.

3. (currently amended)      An injection molding ~~apparatus~~ appartus as claimed in claim 1 ~~claim 2~~, wherein said valve pin guiding portion has an outwardly extending flange having a peripheral edge, said peripheral edge being in abutment with an ~~the~~ inner edge of said opening in said mold plate and aligning said melt channel and said valve pin with said mold gate.

4. (original) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said mold gate is provided in a mold gate insert, said mold gate insert being received in an aperture provided in said mold plate at a downstream end of said opening.

5. (original) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a sealing member provided between said nozzle tip and said nozzle.

6. (original) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein said sealing member is comprised of an insulating material.

7. (currently amended) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein:

said valve pin guiding portion has an outwardly extending flange; and

a gap is present between a downstream end surface of said sealing member and an upstream surface of said outwardly extending flange in a non-operating state.

8. (currently amended) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 3 ~~claim 1~~, wherein a downstream surface of said outwardly extending flange contacts a shoulder provided in said opening of said mold plate.

9. (original) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 8, further comprising at least one cavity provided in said downstream surface of said outwardly extending flange.

10. (currently amended) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 3 ~~claim 1~~, wherein said outwardly extending flange is comprised of an insulating material.

11. (original) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said nozzle tip and said valve pin guiding portion are one-piece.

12. (currently amended) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least one of said valve pin or said valve pin guiding portion comprises cut out channels therein reducing ~~the~~ an area of contact therebetween.

13. (currently amended) An injection molding apparatus, comprising:  
a mold plate adjacent ~~a~~ said manifold having a manifold channel, the mold plate  
having a an opening, a mold gate, and a mold cavity;  
a nozzle being received in said opening in said mold plate, said nozzle having a nozzle channel in fluid communication with said manifold channel;  
a nozzle tip received in a downstream end of said nozzle and having a melt channel in fluid communication with said nozzle channel; and  
a valve pin movable through said manifold channel, said nozzle channel and said melt channel to selectively open said mold gate, ~~;~~ and  
wherein said nozzle tip is flexible and bends laterally to align said melt channel with said mold gate.

14. (currently amended) The injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein said nozzle tip is coupled to a valve pin guiding portion and wherein said valve pin guiding portion has an outwardly extending flange having a peripheral edge, said peripheral edge being in abutment with ~~the~~ an inner edge of said opening in said mold plate and aligning said melt channel and said valve pin with said mold gate.

15. (original) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein said outwardly extending flange is comprised of an insulating material.

16. (original) An injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein said nozzle tip and said valve pin guiding portion are one-piece.

17-21. (cancelled)

22. (new) An injection molding apparatus, comprising:

a mold plate having an opening, a mold gate, and a mold cavity;

a nozzle received in the opening in the mold plate, the nozzle having a nozzle melt channel and a shoulder provided therein;

a nozzle tip received in a downstream end of the nozzle, the nozzle tip being at least partially slidable within the nozzle melt channel, the nozzle tip including,

a nozzle tip melt channel in fluid communication with the nozzle melt channel, and

a valve pin guiding portion provided at a downstream end of the nozzle, including

an outwardly extending flange, and

a step that is adjacent the shoulder provided in the nozzle;

and

a valve pin movable through the nozzle melt channel and the nozzle tip melt channel to selectively open the mold gate, the valve pin being aligned with the mold gate through the valve pin guiding portion.

23. (new) The injection molding apparatus of claim 22, wherein a peripheral edge of the outwardly extending flange is in abutment with an inner wall of the opening in the mold plate to align the melt channel and the valve pin with the mold gate.

24. (new) The injection molding apparatus of claim 22, wherein the valve pin guiding portion and the nozzle tip are two pieces.

25. (new) The injection molding apparatus of claim 22, wherein the valve pin guiding portion and the nozzle tip are made of different materials.

26. (new) The injection molding apparatus of claim 22, wherein the nozzle tip is flexible and bends laterally to align said melt channel with said mold gate.

2107.2300000

27. (new) The injection molding apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the nozzle has a shoulder and the valve pin guiding portion has a step that is adjacent the shoulder.